

Rockford Historic Preservation Commission

December 1, 2009 – 6:00 PM
Conference Room B
Rockford City Hall

Present Janna Bailey, Scott Sanders, Maureen Flanagan, Mark McInnis, Vickie Krueger
Absent Doug Mark, David Hagney
Staff Ginny Gregory, Kevin Ciabatti, Dave Camacho, Todd Cagnoni
Others Tom De Vlieger

Approval of minutes

Scott Sanders made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the minutes of the November 3, 2009 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mark McInnis and **CARRIED** by a vote of 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Certificate of Appropriateness – 413 South First Street

Tom DeVlieger reviewed his application to repair the porch and porch railings, making related improvements to meet current code requirements. He went over the elements in the drawing prepared by architect Rob Belles.

Scott was concerned with the lattice panel proposed for the second story. He suggested a simple railing section instead. He believed it would better match the rest of the property. Tom DeVlieger agreed.

Scott asked if the hand rail would be metal. Tom replied the handrail would be wooden on the outside, with a handicap metal rail on the inside, which has to extend two feet past the stairways.

Tom asked for a recommendation of what he could use underneath the porch for skirting. Mark indicated lattice was appropriate as long as it was installed vertically or horizontally instead of diagonally.

Scott Sanders made a **MOTION** to **APPROVE** the Certificate of Appropriateness with the exception of changing the second story lattice panel to railing section to match the railing used throughout the rest of the porch and deck, and to allow the use of horizontal lattice for the lower deck skirting. The motion was seconded by Mark McInnis and **CARRIED** by a vote of **5-0**.

Chick Hotel – 119 South Main Street

Ginny explained the City's building official, Kevin Ciabatti of Community & Economic Development, could require a change in the building structure for safety reasons. The problem came to light during work on removal of the downtown mall.

Maureen asked if the City owned the building. Ginny replied the City owned part of the building, but not the part including Rockford Office Supply which is where the problem exists.

Kevin explained he has been involved in the streetscape project along North Main. Where the tie-in from the streetscape occurred with the existing building storefront, the City has filled in vaults and other projects to create delineation between where the building stops and the streetscape begins. When the City approached Rockford Office Supply they discovered the storefront was built on a slab that extended several feet below ground but didn't tie it in to any foundation. When the contractors were moving the sidewalk they exposed areas that had nothing underneath it. Kevin referenced the numerous photographs he included for the Commission. These photographs make it evident a deteriorated beam is actually holding up the columns. The corner of the building has been barricaded off as it exhibits the largest structural failure. The main entrance, however, appears to be intact without much deterioration.

Kevin explained the City has hired a structural engineer to look at options and costs regarding this project. He introduced David Camacho, project engineer for the City of Rockford Public Works Department. David explained the main crossbeam was made of timber with limestone mixed in. The City is proposing placing a 4" concrete underlayment on top of the beam; however, the existing structure will not support the proposed improvement with pavers.

Mark asked is the storefront is cantilevered over the vault. Kevin replied the storefront was built in a location that may or may not have been a vault at one time; however, since there is nothing underneath the building it is basically open space on a slab that was held open by tongue and groove decking. He wasn't sure if the material used was a concrete or limestone slab. The area extends over the location where sidewalk pavers need to be applied. In its current condition the building could not support the added weight.

Mark asked if the vault was slated to be filled as part of the streetscape project. David replied it wasn't and the City wasn't even aware it existed until the sidewalk was removed. Mark asked how the other vaults had been filled. Dave replied the other vaults were filled with stone and fine aggregate.

Dave explained that when the vault is filled, the storefront may have to be removed. He expressed the contractor's concern with the glass in the storefront if the structure needed to be removed. Mark expressed his view that since the storefront was not a part of the original structure, the Commission might not be concerned with its removal, but would like to see the original façade restored. Ginny commented this building was constructed prior to the Civil War and structures were designed differently at that point in time. Kevin noted the vault was not very deep. The wall cracked in only one location.

Scott asked if this [resolving the safety issues raised] was a City project. Ginny replied it was undecided at this point. In an effort to complete their streetscape project, the City performed the structural analysis and is looking at viable options for the completion of the project. Kevin noted the vault runs the length of the storefront and the hotel.

Ginny explained that whenever the City's Building Official certifies that work needs to be done for public safety reasons, then what he says controls. She believed ultimately there would be a new storefront or some altering of the original building. At that point the City and/or owner would need this Commission's approval.

Scott asked what the building was originally intended for. Ginny replied the building's first use was for an insurance office but wasn't sure if it had an actual storefront. Scott wondered if the brick façade had been removed at one point. Ginny pointed out the front has probably changed dozens of times.

Vicki Krueger asked how long the existing storefront has existed. Ginny believed the existing storefront has existed since the 1950s.

Ginny stated Dave and Kevin wanted to alert the Commission to this issue. Once Kevin, as the Building Official, certifies that something needs to be done above-ground to meet public safety concerns, this Commission will not be reviewing the plan. This Commission will review any effort to replace the storefront.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on Violations – 400 block Kishwaukee Street

Ginny explained the houses have been painted but repairs such as the porch railings and steps have not been completed. Since the last Code Hearing, the only change is the "for rent" signs that have been placed in front of the houses. Unfortunately, City Attorney John Giliberti, who has been assigned to this Commission, has been working on a current court case and has been unavailable to assist with this property. However, the Code Hearing Officer has levied a fine of roughly \$18,000 on the properties for failure to meet all requirements.

STAFF REPORT

Ginny indicated the driveway at 904 North Prospect Street has not been paved. This can be pursued in the spring by Zoning since the Zoning Ordinance requires all driveways to be paved.

Ginny received a complaint regarding a Certificate of Appropriateness this Commission approved earlier in 2009 for porch railings at 526 Indian Terrace. Ginny presented a photograph of the completed railings to the Commission, just for confirmation that they match what was approved. Commission members

Ginny made the Commission aware the nominations for Illinois Most Endangered list are being accepted.

The *Register Star* reported the Midway Theatre may have been sold through a tax sale. The owners are looking into a family entertainment and education venue. Ginny wasn't certain who the owners were.

Ginny is attempting to meet the CLG survey requirements by packaging work the Commission completed on Mid Town North and along East State around Swedish American Hospital into a

final document. Once completed, she will begin a written summary on Certificates of Appropriateness for the past 30 years.

During Jobapalooza, an event sponsored by the Rockford Area Economic Development Council and others over Thanksgiving weekend to draw young professionals back to Rockford, Ginny acted as tour guide through Rockford's historic districts. This was on a bus tour done as part of the overall event.

With no further business, Scott Sanders made a **MOTION** to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mark McInnis and **CARRIED** by a vote of **5-0**.